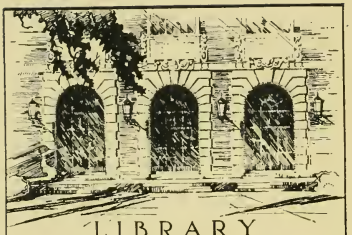

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THE VALUE

OF

MISSIONS IN INDIA,

ESTIMATED BY LAYMEN WHO HAVE SEEN THEM.

THE question, "Are Missionaries to the heathen succeeding in their work; are they doing any real good?" has recently come under the consideration of three laymen of high distinction—Lord LAWRENCE, late Governor-General of India; Sir H. E. BARTLE FRERE, late Governor of Bombay; and Lord NAPIER, late Governor of Madras. The opinions of these independent and competent witnesses are thus stated in their own words:—

1.—LORD LAWRENCE.

[*In a Letter to the Editor of the* TIMES *newspaper, dated 4th Jan.*, 1873.]

"SIR,—Although I must leave to others who are more competent to deal with it the consideration in all its aspects of the very complex question of Missions, upon which you have recently touched in connection with the Day of Prayer, it has so important a bearing upon the stability of our Indian Empire, that I may be pardoned for making a few remarks on the subject.

"A mere enumeration of the countries in which Church of England Missionaries are employed would suffice to show that there are no grounds for stating that they give up any race or region as inaccessible. But, instead of referring to Africa, New Zealand, North-Western America, and other fields in which the Church of England is labouring, I will restrict myself to India, of which I have personal knowledge. Those who are disappointed at the results of Missionary labours in this country must bear in mind that the Hindus, who form the bulk of the population, have shown such tenacity to their faith, that eight centuries of Mohammedan rule had left the masses as strongly wedded as ever to their system

of caste and to their religious belief and rites. In almost all other countries the Mohammedans had succeeded in proselytising the people whom they had subjugated, but in India they found a religious system which had so moulded every thought and habit and custom of the people, that the sword of persecution wielded by some of the Delhi Emperors, and the temporal advantages offered by others, had no effect except upon an insignificant number of the Hindus.

"Bearing in mind that general Missionary effort in India dates from 1813, and that even now Missionaries are sent forth in such inadequate numbers that, with few exceptions, only the large towns and centres have been occupied (some of them with a single Missionary), it was scarcely to be expected that in the course of sixty years the idols of India would be utterly abolished; the wonder rather is that already there are so many unmistakeable indications that Hinduism is fast losing its hold upon the affections of the people. It was hardly to be expected that the citadel should surrender at the first summons, but there is every prospect, by God's blessing, of its being stormed at last; and at this crisis of India's history it is most important that the people should receive instruction in the saving truths of the Gospel.

"But you say there is no human enterprise of such organization as the Missions of the Church of England which shows such poor results. Is this indeed the case? It is very difficult to estimate the effects of moral, and still less of spiritual, work. Those of material operations are palpable to even superficial observation. Not so in the other case. One must look deeply, one must understand the people subject to such influences before it is possible to estimate the effects which have been produced on their minds and characters. The number of actual converts to Christianity in India, including Burmah and Ceylon, is not insignificant. By the latest returns, which are trustworthy, their numbers do not fall much short of 300,000. But these numbers do not by any means give an adequate estimate of the results of Missionary labour. There are thousands of persons scattered over India who, from the knowledge which they have acquired, either directly or indirectly, from the dissemination of Christian truth, of Christian principles, have lost all belief in Hinduism and Mohammedanism, and are in their conduct influenced by higher motives, who yet fear to make an open profession of the change in them, lest they should be looked on as outcasts and lepers by their own people. Such social circumstances must go on influencing converts until the time comes when their numbers are sufficiently large to enable them to stand forth and show their faith, without ruin to their position in life.

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"You tell us, again, that there ought to be many returned Missionaries, and even converts, who ought not to be ashamed of their position. Alas! but few of the former live to see their native land, or, at any rate, to pass the remnant of their lives in it after years of toil abroad. But those who know, or have known, such men as Lacroix, Dr. Duff, Dr. Wilson, C. B. Leupolt and Mr. Smith (both of Benares), Edward Stuart, John Barton, Valpy French, Joseph Welland, and Robert Clark, and many others whose names for the moment escape my memory, within the last twenty years, cannot have a doubt that we have earnest and faithful Christian Missionaries still in our ranks. It is only a month ago since we heard of the death of one of this class, Dr. William Emslie, who for the last seven years had devoted his life to the good cause in Cashmir, and whose death was caused by the privations and exposure incident to the discharge of the duties he had undertaken in that country.

"I will not deny that we did not see as many Christian converts among the natives of India as we would wish, but, nevertheless, there are such men to be found. The Maharajah Duleep Sing is, I believe, a true specimen of that class in England. Many of your readers will recall the sub-assistant surgeon at Delhi (formerly a Hindu in religion) who, at the outbreak of the mutiny, gave up his life rather than renounce the Christian faith which he professed. There are few Englishmen who have taken an interest in Indian Missions who could not produce many other cases of the kind. Men like Lord Napier of Merchistoun, Sir Bartle Frere, and others have borne testimony to the good fruits of Missionary enterprise in India; and in such men as the late Bishop Heber, Bishop Cotton, and the present Bishop Milman and Bishop Gell, we have had and still have clergymen who, both by their example and devotion to their duties, have advanced the faith which they have preached.

"If we are to wait until the time when all the people of England are influenced in their lives by Christian principles before we carry on our efforts to convert the inhabitants of India, I am afraid we must postpone the enterprise to an indefinite period. But was that the principle on which the Gospel was first preached by the commands of our Lord and Saviour? Was that the rule adopted by the Apostles and the Primitive Church? Truly, the conduct and character of Englishmen have had a mighty influence on Missionary enterprise in India and elsewhere. No doubt such considerations have led many a heathen to reject the faith which seemed to him to produce such evil fruit. But the greater the baneful effects of such examples, the more necessary is it that we should apply the Gospel as an antidote. Apart from the higher interests of religion, it is

most important, in the interests of the Empire, that there should be a special class of men of holy lives and disinterested labours living among the people, and seeking at all times their best good. To increase this class, and also to add to the number of qualified teachers among the natives themselves, was the object of the Day of Special Prayer, and in this object I heartly sympathise.

"In England we too often see good and earnest men weakening the influence of the power of Christian faith by their want of union, and by their excessive differences on unimportant points of Church doctrine and administration. This is a stumbling-block in the way of many of our own people, as well as among the natives of India. But such jarring views, for the most part, are either not found among the different classes of Christian Missionaries in that country, or are studiously kept in the background. These Missionaries are in the habit of meeting in conference from time to time for the purpose of mutual counsel, and for the general furtherance of the cause they have

2.—SIR BARTLE FRERE.

[*In a Lecture delivered the 9th July*, 1872.]

"Christianity has now been preached to Fetish-worshipping tribes in every stage of civilization, from naked savages of the wildest forests to the semi-civilized Fetish worshippers who are mixed up with the settled inhabitants of the cultivated country, and the invariable result has been to show that Christianity has power to prevail against Fetish worship, and that the results of the acceptance of Christianity by the Fetish worshipper are invariably to raise him in the moral and social scale, and to make him a civilized being. I believe there is no part of India in which the power of Christian preaching to attract the attention of Fetish worshippers, to win them from the worship of evil and impure deities to the pure religion of Christ, and to raise them in the scale of humanity, has not been abundantly manifested. Most prominently are these results visible amongst the Shanars and other devil-worshipping races of Southern India; the Kols and Gonds of Central India; the Bhils and Coolies, Mhars, Mangs, and Chunars of Western and Central India. Of all these races, it may be truly said that Christianity, as far as its effects have been tried, has proved its possession of the promises of this life as well as of the next."

He further says:—

"I speak simply as to matters of experience and observation, and not of opinion, just as a Roman prefect might have reported to Trajan or the Antonines; and I assure you that whatever you may be told to the contrary, the teaching of Christianity among 160 millions of civilized, industrious Hindus and Mohammedans in India is effecting changes, moral, social, and political, which, for extent and rapidity of effect, are far more extraordinary than anything that you or your fathers have witnessed in modern Europe."

Speaking of the more civilized Indian communities, he says:—

"I answer shortly, that intimate contact with Christianized Europe and a general diffusion of some slight knowledge of Christianity have been the death-knell of caste as the social bond of Hindus. Such a system, the growth of thousands of years among hundreds of millions of people, does not die in a day. It may be that only the first blow has been struck; but that blow has been a fatal one. It may take ages to work out the result; but the result is no longer doubtful. It is not I alone who think so. You cannot gain the confidence of any thoughtful, honest, educated Hindu without finding out that this is his conviction. He may put many subsidiary causes in the foreground. Our superior military strength—our freedom of political and social thought and action—our railways and other means of rapid intercommunication—our free press—our all-embracing literature and open education—our uniform laws,—these and many other agencies will occur to him as the most efficient solvents of his ancient social system. But he instinctively feels what we ourselves are sometimes slow to perceive—that all these institutions and agencies are somehow the products and offshoots of our religion—that Christianity is logically and legitimately the foundation, the well-spring of influence under a hundred shapes, moral and material."

3.—LORD NAPIER.

[*In a Speech at Tanjore, 26th October,* 1871.]

"My travels in this Presidency are now drawing to a close; but when I shall revert to them in the midst of other engagements and other scenes, memory will offer no more attractive pictures than those which will reproduce the features of Missionary life. In Ganjam, in Masulipatam, in North Arcot, in Travancore, in Tinnevelly, in Tanjore, I have broken the Missionary's bread; I have been present at his ministrations; I have

witnessed his teaching; I have seen the beauty of his life. The reverend agents of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, those of the Church Missionary Society, those of the London Mission, the Wesleyan ministers, the Lutheran ministers, the Americans, the Jesuit Fathers,—all have given me the same welcome. I have seen them all engaged in the same task, though under various impulses, and in some respects with different secondary aims. I have seen them engaged in drawing human souls to the same God and the same Saviour, in teaching the same learning, in healing the same diseases with the same science, in making men happier and better subjects of the same Sovereign. But with the Clergy of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel I have a peculiar tie by the affectionate connection which has long existed between my family and the Reverend Secretary of the Mission.

"The benefits of Missionary enterprise are felt in three directions; in converting, teaching, and civilizing the Indian people.

"Of the diffusion of Christianity in this country it would not become me in my present position to say much. It is the primary object of the Missionary, and the object in which he is a perfectly free agent, unfettered by connections with, or obligations to, the State. Yet I may still express my personal impressions. The progress of Christianity is slow, but it is undeniable. Every year sees the area and the number slightly increase. The Gospel is brought more and more to the doors of the poorest and most ignorant outcast people. I cannot but believe that the time may come when these classes, who have no real religious belief and no place in the social hierarchy of their own country, will be attracted in greater numbers by the truths, the consolations, and the benefits of the Christian Faith. The advance of Christianity has at all times been marked by occasional, fitful, and spasmodic movements in India. The present period is one of moderate progression, but it does not exclude the expectation of rapid and contagious expansions, such as were witnessed in the sixteenth century in Malabar and Madura, in the last century in Tanjore, and more recently among the Shanars in the south.

"In the matter of Education the co-operation of the Religious Societies is of course inestimable to the Government and the people. At no previous time were the relations of the Free Educational Agencies with the Government more useful and harmonious. The Missionary bodies have recently assisted the State with the greatest promptitude in effecting a modification of the scale of school fees, which the State could carried out in a satisfactory manner without their assent, and which was indispensable to the development of our educational resources. The same

spirit of co-operation has been shown in the manner in which the Missions have received the educational provisions of the Towns' Improvement Act and the Local Funds' Act. One of the greatest difficulties which the Government will meet in working these provisions for the instruction of the poor will be the influence of caste, which keeps, and will long keep, the outcast child from the municipal and the village school. Missionary agency is in my judgment the only agency that can at present bring the benefits of teaching home to the humblest orders of the population, and the Missionaries will learn to shape their operations so as to avail themselves of the pecuniary help which the recent Acts open to every teaching power. But the conciliatory sentiments which unite the Missions with the Government are equally conspicuous in the relations between the Missionaries and the superior classes of the native community. Nothing has struck me more than the intelligent confidence which reigns beween the Missionary and the Zemindar, between the Englishman and the Hindu, between the teachers and the taught. This harmony between the Christian and the heathen must be the result of much discretion and forbearance on the part of the clergy. It is the fruit of Christian zeal tempered by practical wisdom. Nor is it less honourable to the natives of the country that they have so quickly discerned and appreciated the motives, the temper, and the methods of the foreign teachers who labour among them with so much constancy and so much love.

"In conclusion, I must express my deep sense of the importance of Missions as a general civilizing agency in the South of India. Imagine all these establishments suddenly removed! How great would be the vacancy! Would not the Government lose valuable auxiliaries? Would not the poor lose wise and powerful friends? The weakness of European agency in this country is a frequent matter of wonder and complaint. But how much weaker would this element of good appear if the Mission was obliterated from the scene! It is not easy to overrate the value in this vast empire of a class of Englishmen of pious lives and disinterested labours, living and moving in the most forsaken places, walking between the Government and the people, with devotion to both, the friends of right, the adversaries of wrong, impartial spectators of good and evil."

THE ROYAL PROCLAMATION OF 1858.

To the foregoing words of eminent statesmen the following extract is added from Her Majesty's Proclamation to the inhabitants of India, Nov. 1st, 1858, setting forth the conditions and purpose of British rule in India, avowing the religion of the Sovereign and enjoining mutual respect and forbearance. It leaves an ample field for the spiritual labour of Missionaries, for Christian influence, example, teaching, and persuasion, by which they may contribute to secure the great ends which are declared to be the aim of the civil government :—

"We hold ourselves bound to the natives of our Indian territories by the same obligations of duty which bind us to all our other subjects; and these obligations, by the blessing of Almighty God we shall faithfully and conscientiously fulfil.

"Firmly relying ourselves on the truth of Christianity, and acknowledging with gratitude the solace of religion, we disclaim alike the right and the desire to impose our convictions on any of our subjects. We declare it to be our Royal will and pleasure that none be in anywise favoured, none molested or disquieted by reason of their religious faith or observances, but that all shall alike enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the law; and we do strictly charge and enjoin those who may be in authority under us that they abstain from all interference with the religious belief or worship of any of our subjects, on pain of our highest displeasure. * * *

"When, by the blessing of Providence, internal tranquillity shall be restored, it is our earnest desire to stimulate the peaceful industry of India, to promote works of public utility and improvement, and to administer its government for the benefit of all our subjects resident therein. In their prosperity will be our strength, in their contentment our security, and in their gratitude our best reward. And may the God of All Power grant to us, and to those in authority under us, strength to carry out these our wishes for the good of our people."

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